



Commission presents a set of measures to reinforce rights of EU citizens

Brussels, 6 December 2023

European citizenship is one of the most **significant achievements of the EU**. To mark the 30th anniversary of European citizenship, the European Commission is presenting today a package of measures aiming **to strengthen EU citizenship rights** across the Union. Individuals holding the nationality of an EU country enjoy a set of rights and benefits that are distinct from being a national of a specific Member State, including the right to free movement, consular protection and to actively participate in democratic processes.

The **2023 EU Citizenship Report** released today highlights the progress made in enhancing and promoting citizenship rights, common values, and democratic participation in the EU since the publication of the last Citizenship Report in 2020.

The Commission is proposing today to **amend the rules established under the [Consular Protection Directive](#)** to protect and support EU citizens abroad in times of crisis. This proposal has been prepared in close cooperation with the High Representative, under whose authority work the EEAS and the EU Delegations in third countries. As part of the package the Commission is also presenting new **guidance on the right to free movement, a guide of good electoral practices for citizens with disabilities**, a compendium of **e-voting practices**, as well as a **guide to EU citizenship**.

The Commission is also adopting today its **first report on implementation of the European Citizenship Initiative Regulation** and releasing the latest **[Citizenship and Democracy Eurobarometer survey](#)** which focuses on EU citizens' awareness of their citizenship rights.

Delivering on stronger EU citizenship rights

Among the initiatives, the Commission proposes to revise the **EU Consular Protection Directive** to ensure better and easier protection for EU citizens in a third country, where their country of nationality does not have a consulate or embassy. Therefore, EU citizens should be able to get clearer information and exercise their rights for assistance and protection. Today's proposal includes measures to:

- simplify procedures and make best use of the EU's global network of EU delegations, Member States' embassies and consulates to better assist citizens in need;
- reinforce crisis preparedness and response measures, including by conducting regular consular crisis exercises and preparing crisis consular plans with an assessment of possible risks and an estimate of EU citizens present for each country;
- send joint teams of consular experts to reinforce diplomatic and consular staff during crises.

The revised **guidance on free movement** aims to help Member State authorities and national courts correctly apply [EU free movement rules](#). The previous version of the guidance from 2009 was updated notably to reflect the evolutions in the case-law of the European Court of Justice, taking into account the diversity of families including rainbow families. The new guidance provides legal and practical interpretation and examples on key free movement rights' questions.

The **2023 Citizenship Report** provides an overview of all relevant policy initiatives on EU citizenship since 2020, for example on facilitating travel during the pandemic by means of the EU Digital COVID Certificate, initiatives to address the difficulties faced by mobile EU citizens, and work to step up inclusive democratic processes and ensure equal opportunities in elections.

The **guide of good electoral practices for citizens with disabilities**, as announced in the [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#), presents an overview of good electoral practices from different Member States aiming to further improve participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process.

The compendium of **e-voting practices** presented today gathers e-voting and other Information and Communication Technology practices from across Member States to further promote the exercise of

electoral rights in the EU.

Following up to the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#), the Commission presents **a guide to EU citizenship**, which will equip EU citizens with most essential information on their rights, with a focus on young people and people who recently acquired EU citizenship.

The **2023 Eurobarometer on Citizenship and Democracy**, published alongside the citizenship package, reveals that 50% of respondents feel well informed about their rights as a citizen of the EU, however, 33% do not feel very well informed and 16% feel not informed at all.

The **first report on the functioning of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)** presents the progress made since the 2020 revision of the regulation and announces a set of practical measures aiming to further improve the engagement of European citizens' in EU democratic processes, such as continuing and streamlining the ECI awareness raising efforts in cooperation with the European Parliament and Member States, as well as systematically consulting organisers of successful initiatives when developing policy proposals in response to these initiatives.

Next steps

The Commission is committed to ensuring that EU citizens can fully benefit from their rights and will continue to closely monitor the correct implementation of the rules on EU citizenship, including those on free movement. The Commission will present its next report on EU citizenship in 2026.

Background

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty, which established one of the most significant achievements of the EU: [EU citizenship](#), a status enjoyed by every person who holds the nationality of an EU country. EU citizens enjoy a set of rights and benefits that are distinct from being a national of a specific Member State. EU citizenship rights include the right to non-discrimination on grounds of nationality, to move and reside freely within the EU, to vote and stand as a candidate in European Parliament and local elections, to consular protection, to petition the European Parliament or complain to the European Ombudsman, to launch or support an ECI, and to contact and receive a response from any EU institution. These rights apply in all 27 EU countries.

In accordance with Article 25 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Commission reports every three years on the application of the non-discrimination and citizenship rights of the Union. The last [progress report](#) was published in 2020, together with an '[EU Citizenship Report 2020](#)' [Communication](#).

The Flash Eurobarometer on Citizenship and Democracy covers a range of issues associated with EU citizenship, including Europeans' familiarity with their status as EU citizens and their understanding of some of the key rights it confers. It contains questions on citizens' attitudes to electoral problems, foreign interference, and the role of civil society. Between April 2023 and May 2023, 25 722 people aged 15 and over, from all EU Member States were interviewed on the phone.

For more information

[Implementation Report on the European Citizens' Initiative - Factsheet](#)

[2023 EU Citizenship Report](#)

[New Proposal for a Directive on Consular Protection](#)

[Guidance on the right of free movement of EU citizens and their families](#)

[Guide on good electoral practice for people with disabilities](#)

[Compendium on e-voting](#)

[Guide to EU citizenship](#)

[Flash Eurobarometer on Democracy and Citizenship](#)

[Implementation Report on the European Citizens' Initiative](#)

[EU citizenship - website](#)

[Consular Protection - website](#)

[Democracy and electoral rights - website](#)

[Movement and residence – website](#)

Quotes:

With the recent crises in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Sudan, Niger, Israel and Gaza, we have learned important lessons on how EU Member States and institutions can work better together to assist EU citizens facing emergencies abroad. The revised Consular protection rules we propose today aim to strengthen EU coordination and solidarity in anticipating and responding to crises, making the best use of EU Delegations across the world, to protect EU citizens when they are abroad.
High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell - 06/12/2023

It is impressive to see that majority of Europeans are well aware of their EU citizenship. The citizenship brings tangible rights and benefits to the people such as free movement, effective participation in democracy and consular protection. This is why our package today focuses not only on the rights but also on a way how to exercise them and how to act in case of any restrictions that may be encountered.
Věra Jourová, Vice-President for Values and Transparency - 06/12/2023

This year we mark the 30th anniversary of EU citizenship, introduced by the Maastricht Treaty. Since then, EU rights have become part of our lives, be it when we travel across the EU or outside of the EU, for work or need help when on vacation abroad. EU rights are very tangible rights we all rely on an everyday basis. And it is our role as the Commission to continue our efforts to make it simple for citizens to exercise their rights, and this starts by raising awareness about EU citizenship and it's the rights deriving from it.
Didier Reynders, Commissioner for Justice - 06/12/2023

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